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SUBJECT: MUSA QALA RECONSTRUCTION PLANNING

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. The GIROA, the U.S., and the UK are cooperating on post-operation development in the recently liberated district of Musa Qala. UK Military Stabilization Team (MST) Officers in Musa Qala are implementing a joint UK and Afghan stabilization plan but need USAID support for the effort. The city is in good condition and many buildings require only refurbishment and supplies to support medical and education projects. Musa Qala has electricity, supplies are reaching the city and the district center is secure. Reconstruction efforts are underway but additional support is needed to initiate the larger building programs. USAID is prepared to provide some immediate support, but is more focused on sustainable progress in Musa Qala, by preparing to move rapidly to support livelihood and governance development in the district.

Current Situation in Musa Qala

12. (SBU) An embassy team traveled to Musa Qala on December 29. They met with the MST, and with Haji Pir Mohammad, acting District Administrator of Musa Qala, and Haji Omar, Helmand Provincial Director for the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD).

13. (U) Based on the visit, we have assessed that there is no need for humanitarian assistance. Basic health care and medicine are widely accessible; food and fuel are available in the bazaar; and there is little damage to private homes. They also reported that the commercial bazaar is open, but the adjacent (illegal) drug bazaar is closed. The school was found in good condition, and is receiving cosmetic repairs before reopening in mid-January. Furthermore, electricity continues to flow into the district center although it is subject to the same planned rolling blackouts that the provincial capital experiences.

14. (U) The local population have engaged with both ISAF and the Government. Two shuras have been held at the ISAF-controlled district center. Each shura was attended by over 300 participants, demonstrating community willingness to engage. Afghan National Security Forces, including the police, army and counter-narcotics police, are operating in the area and are thus far being respected by the community.

UK-Designed Development Assistance for Musa Qala

15. (U) On December 17 the UK-led Helmand PRT distributed a Brief on the Combined Reconstruction Plan for Musa Qala. The plan is based on a \$13.8 million joint contribution from the GIRoA, the UK, and the USG. The USG contribution is pegged at \$5.6 million to fund an electricity generation farm and a "cash-for-work" program. The plan, however, was written before a proper assessment was performed. GIRoA and USAID have now completed several trips to Musa Qala in order to develop a USG assistance package that meets the needs of the district's population.

17. (U) The GIRoA has subsequently asked that USAID and Task Force Helmand (TFH) not pursue the proposed electricity generator farm for Musa Qala, as the town receives a regular supply of electricity from nearby Kajaki Dam. Similarly, previously proposed cash-for-work programs were based on a belief there would be widespread destruction within the city and such programs would be required to rebuild the district center while injecting cash into the community to allow individuals to rebuild homes. The fighting did not result in the feared level of destruction, and after consultations, USAID and GIRoA officials determined that large scale cash-for-work is not appropriate.

USAID-Proposed Musa Qala Assistance Package

18. (U) Now that military "clearing" operations have concluded the priority is shifting to "holding" ground and "building" GIRoA authority. The following is an initial, proposed USG contribution to establishing GIRoA authority in Musa Qala, while offering meaningful licit livelihood opportunities for farmers:

-- The GIRoA has asked USAID for immediate support and USAID has

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agreed to assist. USAID has already made charter flights available to move Afghan officials back and forth between Kabul and Lashkar Gah. Additionally, USAID will provide furnishings for government offices and public meeting rooms.

-- Once a permanent District Administrator and District Shura are appointed, USAID will provide \$1 million to fund their priority projects. Projects will be nominated and agreed by the District Administrator and District Shura before being confirmed by provincial authorities. Projects will be jointly executed by district officials and USAID's Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD) Program, with an eye to streamlining USAID's procedures to the extent feasible and to ensuring that the projects are seen as GIRoA activities, not USG activities.

-- The Ministry of Energy and Water has requested that USAID make minor improvements to the electrical distribution system in Musa Qala, and USAID is reviewing this request. Additionally USAID has agreed to build and furnish a small office for the local Director of Energy and Water to facilitate revenue collection that will fund network maintenance.

-- When security permits NGOs and USAID to move freely between the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah and Musa Qala, USAID is prepared to offer contract farming opportunities to five hundred farming families (one third of the Musa Qala population). Under this program, recipients will be provided seed and technical assistance and linked to buyers for the crops. USAID currently plans to provide \$1 million for this program, which will be managed by USAID's Alternative Development Program/South in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, again with a focus on downplaying the USG's direct role.

-- Additionally Combined Security Training Center-Afghanistan has plans to build a new police station in Musa Qala to be completed by the end of 2008. USAID and CSTC-A's commitments to Musa Qala have a total value of approximately \$3 million.

UK & GIRoA Assistance Package for Musa Qala

¶9. (U) The MRRD has agreed to contribute \$3.86 million to Musa Qala's reconstruction, focusing on roads, water, mosques and compensation. Negotiations between the UK and GIROA are ongoing over specific projects. The following outlines preliminary commitments, some of which already represent a change from the 17 December plan.

¶10. (U) Specific GIROA commitments:

- 32 Community-defined Projects (\$560,000)
- Musa Qala Central Mosque
- 4 small city Mosques
- 2 bridges
- 2 water towers
- 500 wells
- Musa Qala to Sangin asphalt Road - 17 Km
- Central Bazaar Road - 1.5 KM
- Yateemchi Road - 5 km
- Flood defenses for 7 villages
- Compensation for damaged properties

¶11. (U) For its part, the UK has agreed to contribute \$4.31 million to fund programs focused on health, education and governance.

Specific UK commitments:

Health

- Comprehensive Health Clinic
- District Hospital
- Basic Health Clinic

Education

- High School Renovation
- High School Education Store
- 16 new schools - outer villages of Musa Qala

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Governance

- District Center Administrative Building
- Governor's Residence refurbishment
- Governor's Residence internet installation
- Shura Support

(COMMENT: The UK funding level and projects identified here are based on cost and need estimates made before military operations ceased. USAID anticipates that the UK will revise and lower costs, as well as scale back programs once site surveys are completed.)

Musa Qala: A Microcosm of Reconstruction Efforts?

¶12. (SBU) Musa Qala is arguably a microcosm of what we face in our effort to rebuild Afghanistan. Musa Qala has been the best-known Taliban stronghold in Afghanistan for the past year. Under their control, it became a narcotics center, where traffickers and Taliban could profit from the entire production chain from raw poppy to finished heroin. Now that we have driven out the Taliban and shut down the drug market, it is time to focus on the "hold" and "build" parts of the "clear-hold-build" continuum that is the coalition mantra here in Afghanistan.

¶13. (U) The GIROA is supporting the effort by asserting the importance of sub-national governance. The newly formed IDLG (Independent Directorate for Local Governance) is convening a shura to confirm a new district administrator for Musa Qala, and the MRRD is taking a lead role in revising the post-operation development.

¶14. (SBU) Our joint success or failure in Musa Qala will be taken as an indicator of how effective the GIROA is at delivering governance and services at the local level. In order to help realize success, the USG must provide financial and technical support, as well as provide guidance to the Afghans on how to coordinate this effort. We will work closely with the GIROA to ensure all relevant line ministries are mobilized to meet the Musa Qala challenge and are coordinated in their efforts to ensure that the central government

is seen by district inhabitants as a competent and committed deliverer of government services.

WOOD